



Public Health

Seattle & King County

HEALTHY PEOPLE. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

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Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Information Sheet

Why is flu vaccine recommended each year?

- Because influenza viruses change from year to year, a new vaccine is needed to provide protection against the new flu viruses that are expected each year.
- A vaccination encourages the body's immune system to develop immunity to the types of flu virus contained in the vaccine.

What types of flu vaccine are available?

- Two types of flu vaccine are available.
 - The traditional flu shot (injectable vaccine) contains inactivated (killed) virus. It is licensed for anyone aged 6 months and older. There is no live virus in this vaccine. This type of vaccine is recommended for people with high risk medical conditions (see below).
 - A live weakened virus vaccine (LAIV) that is sprayed into the nose (intranasal) is licensed for non-pregnant, healthy people ages 5 to 49 years. At this time the nasal spray vaccine is not recommended for high risk groups.
- Flu shots are 70 - 90% effective in preventing or reducing the symptoms of the flu in healthy adults.
- It takes about 2 weeks after vaccination for your body to develop protection that lasts through the flu season, then gradually decreases.

Who should get flu vaccine?

People who are at high risk of complications if they get influenza disease should be vaccinated. People with the following conditions are considered at "high risk:"

- Chronic lung disease, including:
 - asthma
 - emphysema
 - chronic bronchitis
 - bronchiectasis
 - tuberculosis
 - cystic fibrosis
- heart disease
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic metabolic disorders, including diabetes
- severe anemia
- diseases or treatments that depress immunity
- persons with any condition that can interfere with breathing or increase the risk of choking, including seizure disorders
- residents of a nursing home or other chronic care facility

(continued)

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- children 6 through 23 months of age
- persons aged 2-64 years with chronic medical conditions or on long-term aspirin therapy
- persons aged 65 years and older, with or without chronic medical conditions
- pregnant women who will be in their second or third trimester during the flu season

To protect high risk people, adults and children who live, work, or may come in contact with people at high risk should be vaccinated each year, including the following:

- household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children aged less than 6 months
- adults and children aged 2 years and older who live, work or may come in contact with people at high risk.
- physicians, nurses, or other providers of care to high-risk persons

When there is enough flu vaccine, all persons should consider vaccination to prevent the flu, or at least reduce its symptoms.

What will be my reaction to the flu vaccine?

- Most people have little or no reaction to the vaccine.
- One in four may have a swollen, red, tender area where the vaccination shot was injected.
- A much smaller number may develop a slight fever within 24 hours and may have chills, headache, or feel a little sick.
- People who already have a respiratory disease may find their symptoms worsened.
- Usually none of these reactions lasts for more than a couple of days.
- Adverse reactions to the vaccine have been observed in some people, but are rare.
- People who have demonstrated egg protein allergy should be vaccinated under close supervision of a physician and only if their own physician believes it necessary.

When should I get the flu vaccine?

Influenza activity usually begins in late December and early January. October and November are the best months to get the influenza vaccine, but you can get it throughout the influenza season (which usually ends in the spring).